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INFLUENZA IN INDIA, 1918.

The following account has been taken from a preliminary report addressed in February, 1919, to the Government of India on the epidemic of influenza in India in 1918, by Maj. Norman White, High Sanitary Commissioner, quoted in the Bulletin of the International Office of Public Hygiene, Paris, May, 1919, pages 471-490.

In June, 1918, unusual causes of sickness began to be observed in India. At Bombay disabling sickness was noted, occurring chiefly among employees and mill workers. Sporadic cases were observed at Calcutta about the middle of June and at Madras about the end of that month. Previous infection from influenza in India appears to be indicated by the reported occurrence of a disease resembling influenza in the district of Tana, presidency of Bombay, early in the year 1918. It was noted, however, that the first ascertained cases of influenza at Bombay city occurred on a transport arrived in May from Mesopotamia. These cases occurred on the vessel at dock. There had been no occurrence of the disease en route to Bombay, and the vessel had complete communication with the city of Bombay. Influenza occurred at Karachi, and in July the infection appeared to be generally diffused in the Punjab and the United Provinces. Reports of the appearance of the epidemic among troops were received in July from Maymyo, Karachi, Lansdowne, Jubbelpore, Abottabad, Kwandwa, Fort Lockhart, Quetta, Dehra, Dun, Muttra, and Chakrata. In spite of the dissemination of the disease during the months of July and August, no appreciable augmentation of mortality was observed, but toward the end of September mortality began to rise alarmingly at Bombay and on October 6 attained the total of 768 deaths. A second virulent epidemic prevalence was later observed in other parts of India. The epidemic reached its greatest intensity in the central, northern, and western parts of the Indian Empire. In comparison with these regions the Provinces of Bengal, Burma, Bihar and Orissa, Madras, and Assam were only slightly attacked. There was a gradual diminution of intensity toward the east.

Statistics of mortality due to influenza in British India have been calculated by deducting from the total for the period studied in the year 1918 the figures representing the total for the corresponding period of a normal year, taking into account the coexistence of other epidemic diseases. But for influenza the second half of the year 1918 would appear to have been abnormally free from epidemic diseases. The epidemic of plague then present was the most benign since 1898, and the malarial incidence was below normal.

The table here presented gives the estimated mortality for the Provinces of British India directly or indirectly attributable to

influenza. Only deaths occurring previous to November 30 are included, the greatest number of these deaths having occurred during the months of October and November. On November 30, 1918, the epidemic was everywhere on the decline, and in most parts of the country mortality had become normal.

Province.	Population (census of 1911).	Estimated number of deaths from influenza.	Influenza deaths per 1,000 population.
Ajmere-Merwara.....	501,395	33,407	66.6
Central Provinces and Berar.....	13,916,308	790,820	56.8
Delhi.....	416,656	23,175	55.6
Bombay.....	19,587,383	900,000	45.9
Punjab.....	19,337,146	816,317	42.2
Northwestern Frontier.....	2,041,077	82,000	40.0
United Provinces.....	46,820,506	1,072,671	22.9
Coorg.....	174,976	3,382	19.0
Madras.....	40,005,735	509,667	12.7
Assam.....	6,051,507	69,113	11.4
Bihar and Orissa.....	34,489,846	359,482	10.3
Burma.....	9,885,853	60,000	6.0
Bengal.....	45,329,247	213,098	4.7
Total for British India.....	238,527,635	4,933,132	20.7

As regards the incidence of influenza in the native States, the data available are very vague except for Mysore. The total number of deaths in Mysore State attributable to influenza in 1918 was 127,651, equivalent to a mortality of 22.37 per 1,000. The epidemic was very severe in all the Central States of India. Complete reports have not been received, but the official physician of Central India asserts that the total mortality from influenza in Central India was not less than 6 per cent of the population, which numbers nearly 9,000,000. In the Bikanir the mortality due to influenza in October and November, 1918, was estimated at 61,211 deaths in a population of 683,320 (89.5 per 1,000). In the city of Udaipur, State of Udaipur, 1,475 persons (44.7 per 1,000) died of influenza in less than six weeks. In the dominions of the Nizam and Hyderabad the number of deaths was not far from 350,000 (27 per 1,000).

As regards influenza among troops serving in India the prevalence of the disease is stated to have been more considerable among British soldiers than among Hindu soldiers, while the mortality among the Hindu troops was much greater. Admissions to hospital were for British troops, 218.2 per 1,000 of the effective force for influenza, and 3.1 for pneumonia; for the Hindu troops the figures were 135.6 and 20.2. The proportion of deaths among British troops was 8.96 for influenza and 0.65 for pneumonia; for the Hindus the proportion was, respectively, 15.21 and 6.48. The normal occurrence of pneumonia among Hindu troops is stated to be almost four times greater than among British troops.